



Testimony of the Connecticut AFL-CIO

Before the Labor and Public Employees Committee

March 5th, 2015

Senator Gomes, Representative Tercyak and members of the Labor and Public Employees Committee,

We submit this testimony on behalf of the 900 affiliated local unions who represent 200,000 working men and women from every city and town in our great state submit testimony as follows:

S.B. No. 106 (COMM) AN ACT CONCERNING RETALIATION AGAINST IMMIGRANT WORKERS

We support this legislation. No worker should fear retaliation but the fact is retaliation is quite prevalent within the world of immigrant labor. Workers' who stand up when something is unsafe, not being done appropriately or violating state law should not fear repercussion. The Connecticut AFL-CIO is willing to work with the committee on this very important legislation.

S.B. No. 914 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING AN EMPLOYER'S FAILURE TO PAY WAGES and S.B. No. 1037 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING EMPLOYEE LIENS AGAINST EMPLOYERS FOR UNPAID WAGES

We support this legislation. In economies of high unemployment, bad employers are often found exploiting workers by failing to pay them a proper wage. This penalty should deter employers from taking such risky and hurtful action.

S.B. No. 1035 (COMM) AN ACT CONCERNING BULLYING IN THE WORKPLACE

We support this legislation. Every 16 hours a worker dies on the job, and once every eighty hours that employee is murdered on the job. Violence and bullying are a growing epidemic and a costly one too. According to Business Week magazine bullying "increases employee turnover, it causes a loss of productivity" both of which means additional costs to the State. This legislation is an important one for both the worker and the State.

H.B. No. 6784 (RAISED) AN ACT EXPANDING PAID SICK LEAVE – We support this legislation. Circumstances within families are very different for many people and this legislation, by expanding the definition of certain extended family members, can create relief for those that are coping with the health needs of those family members.

H.B. No. 6932 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING PAID FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE - We, at the Connecticut AFL-CIO strongly believe workers need and deserve to be able to take a paid day off in the event of being sick. It is a fundamental right of a fair and just society and is good business practice. We also believe paid sick days should come from a worker's collective bargaining agreement and that all workers should have such an agreement that provides them fundamental quality of life benefits. Unfortunately, in America today, the deck is so stacked against worker's trying to join a union that we find ourselves coming to the legislature seeking enactment of a law to provide these benefits. We look forward to the day when all Connecticut workers have the right to form a union and when benefits such as this will not have to be legislated but instead will be negotiated as part of a collective bargaining agreement. We applaud the work of the PCSW Family Medical Leave Insurance Task for their time and effort creating recommendations and report regarding this most important issue.

H.B. No. 6933 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING PREDICTABLE SCHEDULING FOR EMPLOYEES

We support this concept but have concerns about how this proposed legislation is written and would be happy to work with the committee on this. This legislation seeks fairness from employers to address employees issues regarding not only work hour scheduling but pay fairness. In the new economy of employees having possibly more than one job, issues of two or three work schedules must create unrest for the employee and their families. The posting of a proper schedule affords the employee an opportunity to also have an overview of their upcoming income based on their wages and hours at that particular job.

We also support the following per a resolution passed recently at the Connecticut AFL-CIO political convention (resolution attached)

S.B. No. 858 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING EMPLOYEES WHO CUSTOMARILY AND REGULARLY RECEIVE GRATUITIES AND THE MINIMUM FAIR WAGE.

H.B. No. 6791 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING WORKERS' WAGES AT LARGE CORPORATIONS.

H.B. No. 6877 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING A MINIMUM WORK WEEK FOR PERSONS PERFORMING JANITORIAL WORK.

RESOLUTION 8 - SUPPORT RAISING WAGES

WHEREAS, more than four years after the end of the Great Recession, economic growth is still weak and unemployment is still higher than its peak in the previous recession;

WHEREAS, the heart of the problem is the stagnation of wages and the lack of middle-class buying power, and the solution is to replace the failed low-wage economic strategy of the past 30 years with a high-wage strategy for shared prosperity;

WHEREAS, a high-wage strategy for shared prosperity must include: (1) restoring workers' ability to bargain collectively; (2) strengthening labor standards and employment protections for all workers; (3) making full employment the central objective of U.S. fiscal and monetary policy; (4) forging a new model of engagement with the global economy so that we make things in America again and eliminate the U.S. trade deficit; and (5) shrinking our bloated financial sector and making it serve the real economy;

WHEREAS, Wall Street and the wealthiest Americans are refusing to pay their fair share in taxes, even if it means condemning the rest of America to high unemployment, bad jobs, low wages and economic insecurity; at the same time, they are demanding cuts to Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security benefits to pay for lower tax rates;

WHEREAS, working people are facing growing economic insecurity, made worse by the Great Recession: less job security; fewer defined-benefit pensions; the inadequacy of 401(k) plans; lower wages that leave less money to put away toward retirement; higher health care premiums; more cost-sharing for health care; fewer unemployment benefits; and the loss of vital public services;

WHEREAS, the appropriate response to the increase in economic insecurity is to bolster programs that provide economic security, such as Social Security, Medicaid, Medicare, Unemployment Insurance and quality public services;

WHEREAS, making the wealthiest Americans and Wall Street pay their fair share in taxes would generate large amounts of new revenues that could be used to make necessary investments in infrastructure, education, manufacturing and energy;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Connecticut AFL-CIO will support and mobilize for the following efforts at the federal, state and local levels to provide economic security for every worker in America:

- Freedom to Form a Union and Bargain Collectively. We will support legislation to restore workers' ability to form or join a union and legislation to extend bargaining rights to workers who do not have them; we will oppose legislation that impairs existing rights. We will support efforts of workers to bargain collectively.
- Raise and Index the Minimum Wage. We will support efforts--at the federal level as well as the state and local levels--to increase the minimum wage and ensure that it rises annually. We reject the notion that tipped workers or agricultural workers or anybody else should be paid less than the minimum wage.
- Equal Pay for Equal Work. We will support legislation ("Paycheck Fairness Act") to protect workers against gender discrimination.
- Family and Medical Leave. We will support legislation to apply the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) to smaller businesses and to provide for paid leave through general revenues.
- Expand Labor Protections. We will support legislation to expand labor protections, such as wage and hour and overtime, for workers who still lack them, including home care workers, farmworkers and domestic workers.
- Living Wage. We will support efforts to require a living wage for all workers, including contractors, and will support local ordinances to establish living wage standards.
- Prevailing Wage. To keep the government from undermining labor standards, we will work to improve the process for determining prevailing wages under the Davis-Bacon and Service Contract Acts. We will support legislation to keep publicly funded projects from undermining labor standards.
- Unemployment Insurance. We will support legislation to address the financial crisis of the UI system and oppose proposals to reduce benefit weeks or amounts.
- Trade. We will oppose fast track bills, which lead to damaging trade deals like NAFTA, which has resulted in a U.S. trade deficit of \$540 billion in 2012, millions of lost jobs, and communities left devastated in the wake of closed factories and lost economic opportunities. We will demand trade agreements be negotiated in an open and democratic way and contain robust jobs, skills, and investment packages that will allow U.S.-based companies and their workers to take advantage of any benefits of trade.

- Medicare, Social Security and Medicaid. We will continue our absolute opposition to any cuts in Medicare, Social Security or Medicaid benefits—no matter what form they take or who proposes them—including proposals to lower Social Security cost-of-living increases; raise the Social Security retirement age; raise the Medicare eligibility age; increase income-related Medicare premiums; shift costs to Medicare beneficiaries through higher deductibles, co-pays and coinsurance; and reduce federal Medicaid payments to the states. We will support: an across-the-board increase in Social Security benefits, which would be especially meaningful for low-income seniors; higher Social Security cost-of-living increases, to reflect the higher share of seniors' incomes that goes to health care and housing; and Medicare benefits, so Medicare can serve as a model for a single high standard of care for everyone, sometimes called "Medicare for All."
- Pensions. We will oppose attacks on workers' pensions under the guise of deficit reduction.
- Tax Fairness. We will demand that the wealthiest Americans pay their fair share. We will support (1) higher tax rates on income greater than \$1 million; (2) reducing or eliminating the tax preference for capital gains and dividends; (3) restoring a robust estate tax; (4) establishing a minimum 30% effective tax rate for millionaires; and (5) ending the "carried interest" tax loophole for Wall Street investment managers.

We thank the committee for having this public hearing.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lori Pelletier

Executive Secretary Treasurer, Connecticut AFL-CIO